



WOKENESS OVER READINESS: THE IMPACT ON OUR MILITARY

It is no secret that leaders in the Pentagon have prioritized woke policies that have significantly impacted our national security, such as vaccine mandates, transgender policies, critical race theory training, and an overall prioritization of political correctness over military readiness. Within our armed forces, 68% of service members said they had witnessed politicization in the military, with 65% expressing concern.¹ In a time of global unrest, it's more important than ever that we have the best prepared and equipped fighting force in the world and abandon the woke policies that threaten that.

PROBLEMATIC POLICIES

- **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

- In the United States Air Force Academy's diversity and inclusion training material, cadets are told to use "gender-neutral language" and avoid terms such as "you guys" and "mom and dad." In addition, cadets are discouraged from being "color blind" on race and, instead, should be "color conscious." The training states that "our leaders have deemed D&I a warfighting imperative."²
- President Trump ended President Obama's policy allowing transgender individuals to serve in the military.³ However, President Biden reinstituted this policy within his first week in office.⁴ Furthermore, the Biden administration allows active-duty military personnel to take time off to obtain sex-change surgeries and receive hormone treatment on the taxpayer dime.⁵
- The U.S. Naval Academy included the book *How to Be an Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi, a notable proponent of Critical Race Theory and Marxism, in the sailors' reading lists.⁶
- In 2022, the Army scrapped a gender-neutral physical fitness test due to the high failure rate in women.⁷ The Army Combat Fitness Test (ACFT) was implemented in 2019 and expanded the testing to include six events. This test, and general military physical testing, aims to improve soldier readiness and enhance mental toughness and stamina.⁸ However, since 44% of women were failing versus only 7% of men, the Army has implemented lower fitness standards for women in the name of equity.⁹ ¹⁰ Nobody would want a lawyer, accountant, or physician who could only achieve lower standards, so the American military should not be implementing them either. Lowering standards for fitness reduces the standard of our national defense, compromises our troops' effectiveness, and jeopardizes their survivability in combat.

- **Vaccine Mandate**

- In September 2021, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin ordered that all active-duty forces, reserves, and National Guard service members be fully vaccinated against COVID-19.¹¹ Some exemptions for religious or health reasons were granted, but obtaining one was cumbersome and inefficient. Failure to comply often resulted in a discharge, leading to more than 8,400 troops being fired.¹² This number becomes starker as the U.S. Army alone was 15,000 recruits short of its 2022 recruitment goal.¹³

- Congress repealed the mandate in December 2022's National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). Despite opposing the mandate rollback, Biden signed the NDAA on December 23, 2022.¹⁴
- While the vaccine mandate is scheduled to end in March 2023, there is no formal process for the over 8,400 discharged due to noncompliance to be reinstated and/or receive back pay.¹⁵ Many still may face discipline, per the Department of Defense.¹⁶

• A Generation Opting Out

- The Army fell 25% short of its recruiting goal for the Fiscal Year 2022.¹⁷ Much of this may stem from Americans' general aversion to woke indoctrination. A 2022 poll found that 69% of Americans oppose teaching critical race theory in schools.¹⁸ When the ideology is now being implemented in the armed services, many would likely feel disincentivized to join. Americans who could be interested in serving do not want to be force-fed radical racial and gender ideologies that counter their values.¹⁹
- In addition, many young Americans who chose not to get the COVID-19 vaccine and/or boosters were ineligible to join. They could now be wary of future medical mandates, leading them not to join the service.²⁰

POLICY SOLUTIONS

- Congress should pass the *Ensuring Military Readiness Act*,²¹ which prevents those suffering from gender dysphoria from serving in the military until they have been stable in their biological sex for 36 months.
- Congress should implement the *Combatting Racist Training in the Military Act*,²² which prevents woke ideology from being taught in any Department of Defense institution or service academy.

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¹ Elizabeth Fender. Poll: Nearly Seven in 10 Active Service Members Have Witnessed Politicization in U.S. Military. The Heritage Foundation. <https://www.heritage.org/defense/report/poll-nearly-seven-10-active-service-members-have-witnessed-politicization-us>

² Jessica Chasmar. Air Force Academy diversity training tells cadets to use words that 'include all genders,' drop 'mom and dad'. Fox News. <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/air-force-academy-diversity-training-tells-cadets-to-use-words-that-include-all-genders-drop-mom-and-dad>

³ Military Service by Transgender Individuals. Federal Register. <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2017/08/30/2017-18544/military-service-by-transgender-individuals>

⁴ Preventing and Combating Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation. Federal Register. <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/01/25/2021-01761/preventing-and-combating-discrimination-on-the-basis-of-gender-identity-or-sexual-orientation>

⁵ Statement by Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III on Transgender Service in the Military. U.S. Department of Defense. <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/2481568/statement-by-secretary-of-defense-lloyd-j-austin-iii-on-transgender-service-in/>

⁶ Jack Beyrer. Navy Reading List Includes Anti-Racism Book for Sailors. The Washington Free Beacon. <https://freebeacon.com/national-security/navy-reading-list-includes-anti-racism-book-for-sailors/>

⁷ Lolita C. Baldor. Army eases fitness test standards for women, older troops. Associated Press News. <https://apnews.com/article/army-8107bd2d5ad1db574a72e98dd789fbff>

⁸ Army Combat Fitness Test. U.S. Army. <https://www.army.mil/acft/>

⁹ Steve Beynon. More Female Soldiers Are Passing the ACFT, But Their Scores Still Trail Men's <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2021/05/17/more-female-soldiers-are-passing-acft-their-scores-still-trail-mens.html>

¹⁰ Chaitra M. Hardison, Paul W. Mayberry, Heather Krull, Claude Messan Setodji, Christina Panis, Rodger Madison, Mark Simpson, Mary Avriette, Mark E. Totten, Jacqueline Wong. Independent Review of the Army Combat Fitness Test. RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA1825-1.html

¹¹ Janet A. Aker. Deadlines Set for All Service Members' Vaccination Against COVID. Health.mil. <https://health.mil/News/Articles/2021/09/20/Deadlines-set-for-all-service-members-vaccinations-against-COVID>

¹² Lolita C. Baldor. Troops who refused COVID vaccine still may face discipline. Associated Press News. <https://apnews.com/article/military-covid-vaccine-discharged-congress-480088ff9348e0f9d38dd27b05fc73e6>

¹³ Meghann Myers. Is the military too 'woke' to recruit?. Military Times. <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2022/10/13/is-the-military-too-woke-to-recruit/>

¹⁴ H.R. 7776 James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023. United States House of Representatives. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/7776>

¹⁵ Meghann Myers. Pentagon sets deadline for services to stop enforcing vaccine mandate. Military Times. <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2023/02/24/pentagon-sets-deadline-for-services-to-stop-enforcing-vaccine-mandate/>

¹⁶ Lolita C. Baldor. Troops who refused COVID vaccine still may face discipline. Associated Press News. <https://apnews.com/article/military-covid-vaccine-discharged-congress-480088ff9348e0f9d38dd27b05fc73e6>

¹⁷ Meghann Myers. Is the military too ‘woke’ to recruit?. Military Times. <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2022/10/13/is-the-military-too-woke-to-recruit/>

¹⁸ Thomas Spoehr. The Rise of Wokeness in the Military. The Heritage Foundation. <https://www.heritage.org/defense/commentary/the-rise-wokeness-the-military>

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ Michael Lee. Top Marine general says COVID vaccine mandate is hurting military recruiting efforts. Fox News. <https://www.foxnews.com/us/top-marine-general-says-covid-vaccine-mandate-hurting-military-recruiting-efforts>

²¹ H.R. 1112 – Ensuring Military Readiness Act of 2023. United States House of Representatives. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/1112>

²² H.R. 3134 – Combatting Racist Training in the Military Act of 2021. United States House of Representatives. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/3134>